

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 CU-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5187
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UNCLAS PANAMA 0139

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: NINTH OF JANUARY DEMONSTRATION

REF: HINSON-FILIPOVITCH TELECON, 1245 1/9/78

1. NINTH OF JANUARY ANNIVERSARY OF 1964 RIOTS WAS MARKED BY AN ORDERLY DEMONSTRATION WHICH INCLUDED A BRIEF RALLY ON THE MIDDLE OF THE THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE.

2. DEMONSTRATORS WERE LARGELY FROM GOP-BACKED PANAMANIAN STUDENT FEDERATION (FEP) AND VARIOUS ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS (RADICAL LEFT FER HELD ITS OWN SEPARATE MARCH TO 1964 "MARTYRS" GRAVES). CROWD ESTIMATES ON MAIN DEMONSTRATION: EMBASSY RSO ESTIMATED SOME 400-500 AT ONE POINT IN MARCH; USSOUTHCOM ESTIMATED 700-1200 PRESENT AT DEMONSTRATION ON BRIDGE, WITH SOME ESTIMATES GOING AS HIGH AS 2000.

3. DEMONSTRATORS GATHERED AT PLAZA PORRAS IN PANAMA CITY, THEN MARCHED VIA SHALER TRIANGLE AND FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE TO THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE. MARCHERS WERE LED BY 21 CASKETS, EACH MARKED WITH NAME OF ONE OF THE "MARTYRS"

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OF 1964. PLACARDS AND SIGNS CARRIED ONLY USUAL RHETORIC.

4. MARCH AND BRIEF RALLY FOR SPEECHES ON MIDDLE OF BRIDGE BLOCKED TRAFFIC FOR ABOUT AN HOUR. FROM THERE, DEMONSTRATORS MARCHED TO "MARTYRS" GRAVES AT AMADOR GUERRERO CEMETERY, LEAVING CASKETS ON BRIDGE, AND LATER TOOK BUSES TO ANOTHER CEMETERY ON OUTSKIRTS OF CITY WHERE

REMAINDER OF "MARTYRS" ARE BURIED. CROWD THEN DISPERSED.

5. MARCHERS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD: CANAL ZONE POLICE AND MILITARY POLICE REMAINED ON ALERT BUT AVOIDED ANY DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH DEMONSTRATORS.

6. DEMONSTRATION WAS PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY THROUGHOUT. THERE WERE NO INCURSIONS INTO CANAL ZONE AREAS BEYOND BRIDGE AND PUBLIC ROADS ALONG ZONE BORDER NORMALLY USED WITHOUT RESTRICTION BY PANAMANIAN, NOR ANY OTHER UNTOWARD INCIDENTS. WE ARE AWARE OF NO INCIDENTS INVOLVING US FLAG, INCLUDING FLAG WHICH NORMALLY FLIES (ALONGSIDE A PANAMANIAN FLAG) ON THATCHER FERRY BRIDGE.

7. MEDIA COVERAGE OF PREPARATIONS FOR DEMONSTRATION WAS RELATIVELY LIGHT ON JANUARY 9, AND UNWORTHY OF SPECIAL NOTE. NO MORNING PAPERS APPEARED JANUARY 10 DUE TO HOLIDAY PREVIOUS DAY.

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